

Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities  
Annual Report 2025





# From Our Superintendent: Growth, Advocacy and Opportunity in 2025

Though our mission remains the same, Franklin County DD continues to find new ways to respond to the needs of children and adults with developmental disabilities in Ohio's largest county. Our community is growing, diverse, and steadfast on its journey to become truly inclusive and accessible to all.

During 2025, Franklin County DD expanded advocacy efforts and worked to make it easier for people with disabilities to connect and make their voices heard. We focused on serious self-advocacy, education and training, and also on fun: Hundreds attended Legislative Advocacy Day at the main Columbus library, enjoyed a free Franklin County DD Day at the Columbus Museum of Art, and packed our agency parking lot for a disability-friendly Trunk or Treat.

Franklin County DD made great strides in 2025 serving more young children, people in need of Medicaid waivers, and those seeking community housing.

- Added capacity allowed us to reach more than 3,000 young children with Early Intervention services.
- Another 273 people were enrolled in the Medicaid home- and community-based waiver program, bringing our total to more than 6,200.
- We provided rent subsidies to 572 people with developmental disabilities and supported 976 in affordable housing through Creative Housing.
- Support and funding continued for the Johnstown Road Dental Clinic, a unique partnership between Franklin County DD and the Ohio State University Nisonger Center that provides pediatric dental care regardless of ability to pay.

Sustainability will be key in the months ahead, as expenditures rise while revenues stay relatively flat. Franklin County DD administrative staff performed an in-depth analysis in 2025 to project the required funding for the local match, or non-federal, share of Medicaid waiver costs. We continue to identify opportunities to "Close the Gap" between expenditures and revenues.

In 2026, we'll establish a Self-Advocate Activity Fund and dive into Inclusion Seekers programming with Starfire Council. We'll work on a long-term housing plan, and tap new technology tools to help families with provider selection and give staff a more efficient case-management system. And we aim to find out just how Franklin County residents with DD are doing under the state's Employment First policy.

Strong relationships with our community partners, ongoing collaborations and—most important—our dedication to the individuals and families we serve make these accomplishments possible.

We're grateful for your support.



Dot Yeager  
Superintendent/CEO

# 2025 Board Members



Dean Fadel  
President



Marci Straughter  
Vice President



Karen Wilkins  
Secretary



Michael Underwood



Rebecca Swartz



Gene Harshaw



Katherine Silver Kelly

## A Personal Perspective on Service

By law, at least two of the seven members of the governing bodies of Ohio's county boards of developmental disabilities must be immediate family members of people eligible for board services, and one member should be personally eligible. Franklin County DD proudly exceeds these requirements. And in 2025 we again welcomed two new board members who are parents of adults with developmental disabilities: Gene Harshaw, whose son Zayne launched the Blue Spectrum band, and Rebecca Swartz, who has helped to raise awareness about the need for universal changing tables in public restrooms with her daughter, Taylor.

Whether connected to the DD community through family, friends or civic interest, board members serve—without compensation—because they care about inclusion. A third new Franklin County DD board member in 2025, Katherine Silver Kelly, has a background in special education and is a longtime coach with Franklin County Special Olympics.

Our agency was especially fortunate during the past year to have four of seven board members sharing their perspective as family members, and one providing insight as a person living with disability. Such contributions enrich us all.



# What We Do

Franklin County DD is a government agency that supports children and adults with developmental disabilities. We touch the lives of not only the thousands of people we serve, but also their families and caregivers, employers, educators and more.

Our assistance spans a lifetime. For infants and young children, support often begins with early-intervention and preschool services. As youth with disabilities grow and transition to adulthood, Franklin County DD is there to help with connections to housing, jobs, day support, recreation and social activities.

We also work to keep people with disabilities safe and are available 24/7 for reports of suspected abuse, neglect or other incidents.

Franklin County DD employs hundreds of professionals and contracts with many service providers and advocacy organizations. Together with self-advocates, families and allies, we continued our work in 2025 toward building a community that is inclusive and accessible for all.

**14,005**

Average number of children and adults served each day

**76%**

Survey respondents satisfied with Franklin County DD programs and supports

**\$56.5 million**

Funding provided to community partners

**6,252**

Medicaid waiver recipients

**164**

Adults referred to Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities for job services

**1,000+**

Visitors and vendors at the Franklin County DD Provider Fair

**2,000+**

Waiver providers in Franklin County

**-14%**

Decrease in major unusual incident investigations from previous year

**121**

Children and parents attending new water-safety classes

**280**

Social events held through Franklin County Recreation

**679**

Franklin County DD employees



# Early Childhood Services

As the number of young children served through our center- and home-based programs continues to grow, Franklin County DD took steps in 2025 to build capacity, strengthen longstanding community partnerships and adopt more-efficient documentation and service-team systems.

Such improvements aren't always visible to families. But they make a big difference across the span of our Early Childhood Education programs, which served nearly 3,500 children in 2025—an increase of 47% since 2020.

Our support for Franklin County DD families and the broader community took many forms in 2025:

- We continued to collaborate with the Mid-Ohio Food Collective to host monthly drive-through produce markets at both our Early Childhood Education Family Center and our Early Childhood Learning Community, distributing free vegetables and fruit to more than 3,000 households.
- We teamed with Nationwide Children's Hospital to offer positive-parenting courses, resulting in the creation of a parent-led support group for parents and caregivers of children with developmental delays and disabilities.
- We maintained our unique partnership with the Ohio State University Nisonger Center to operate the Johnstown Road Dental Clinic, which provided approximately 4,500 patient visits—regardless of ability to pay—and trained nearly 100 students from the OSU College of Dentistry.

“We learn so much from each other as parents—it might be people at work, where you go to church, people you meet in the grocery line. But what happens when your child is different?”

Hilary

Parent who helped start a support group for parents and caregivers of children with disabilities and delays



# Advocacy, Recreation and Special Olympics

Advocates, athletes and active members of the Franklin County Recreation program had more ways than ever to connect in 2025.

Growing numbers of people attended Self-Advocate Advisory Council meetings; hundreds turned out for special events such as a disability-friendly Trunk or Treat; and the agency sponsored advocates to attend both the Synergy Conference and Project STIR training.

Franklin County DD's signature Legislative Advocacy Day also moved to an expansive new location in 2025 at the Columbus Metropolitan Library, making it even easier for policymakers and advocates to directly engage.

Those efforts led to more opportunities for people to speak up and make their voices heard. Our Franklin County Special Olympics program grew, too, as did the recreation program operated by community partner organization Hattie Larlham:

- The Special Olympics program sent 130 of our more than 300 registered Flyers athletes to Summer Games; the 2025-26 women's basketball team took home gold at the Winter Games.
- A record number of Franklin County DD athletes signed up for the annual Polar Plunge fundraiser, and our Ohio State University football parking fundraiser generated \$40,000 to support athletes.
- The recreation program had approximately 340 active members taking part in a wide array of evening and weekend social activities in 2025, a 27% increase in member signups from the previous year.
- The program offered 280 events during 2025—everything from boat trips and dances to restaurant outings and concerts.



# School-Age Services

In collaboration with local school districts, Franklin County DD operates a unique school-age program designed for transition-age youth with multiple disabilities.

West Central School and Transition Services takes a whole-child approach and uses a functional skills-based curriculum to help students with high needs—and their families and caregivers—prepare for life beyond school.

- In 2025, West Central had 15 classrooms and served approximately 100 students age 14 to 22.
- Students have access to on-site speech, occupational, and physical therapy, as well as adapted physical education, recreational and therapeutic swimming, art, and music classes. In the fall of 2025, West Central added a board-certified behavior analyst.
- Community exploration, with visits to restaurants, retail sites, parks, museums and more, is an essential part of the West Central experience. Classrooms also regularly visit the smart apartment to practice daily living skills. Our Transition Team continues to partner with Creative Housing to expand smart apartment opportunities.
- Work exploration is another West Central hallmark, with students doing in-house vocational tasks and gaining hands-on experience at local businesses and nonprofits. In 2025, West Central also began offering pre-employment transition services through Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities.



“I love being with my friends at West Central.”

Amia  
A student at West Central

# Person-Centered Service Plans

“It worked out for the best, because I ended up here.”

Evan

Who feels valued and supported at his job

“He’s the backbone of my back of the house.”

Mary

Evan’s manager

Franklin County DD service coordinators were providing support to more than 9,000 people in 2025, helping them and their families create blueprints for fulfilling lives.

Service plans that reflect both the person’s assessed needs and their own goals can pave the way for success at school or on the job, with friends and family and co-workers, and in living as independently as possible.

Evan and his support team understood that finding the right employment situation isn’t always easy. But they kept trying until he landed a job where both the people and the pace felt right, and after more than six years as a valued staff member at the Hilliard-Mill Run Panera, Evan has attained the kind of employment longevity that can be elusive for many in the disability community.

“You definitely know when Evan’s not here,” his manager, Mary, says. “People expect to see him.”

She and other co-workers also love to turn out for Evan during his performances with Open Door Stage & Screen, an inclusive, artist-led ensemble that features performers with and without disabilities. “We go to all his shows,” Mary said. “Evan does a great job combining his two worlds.”

Franklin County DD connected hundreds of people with disabilities to employment and vocational rehabilitation services in 2025, collaborating with providers, employers, the Ohio State University Nisonger Center and Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities.





“They really are remarkable. They’ve come such a long way together.”

Hannah

Independent provider supporting Cliff and Isabelle, a couple with disabilities who have been married for 50 years

## Community Partners & Medicaid Waivers

Franklin County DD provides funding for services that allow adults and children with developmental disabilities to live and thrive in their communities.

At the end of 2025, our agency had 6,252 people enrolled in the Medicaid waiver program—by far the most of any Ohio county. Medicaid waivers make it possible for people to receive the services they need at home and in community-based settings instead of residential facilities and institutions.

From help with transportation and employment to personal care, therapy, recreation and advocacy activities, waivers provide opportunity and access.

The federal government pays the largest share of waiver costs, with the state of Ohio and local county boards providing match funds. Franklin County residents with developmental disabilities received \$514 million in waiver services in 2025 at a cost of \$110 million to county taxpayers.

And we helped individuals and families find the providers that best meet their needs. Our Connector program has assisted more than 600 people since it began; our 2025 Franklin County DD Provider and Community Resource Fair drew more than 1,000 visitors and vendors to the Ohio Expo Center to meet and talk in person.

Franklin County DD also disbursed \$56.5 million to public and private partner organizations that help with support and resources in homes, schools, on the job and in other community or recreational settings.

# 2025 Financials

## Receipts

Levy and Other Local Funds	Amount
Tax levy	\$186,405,349
Active treatment	464,525
Student services	1,826,126
Sale of personal property	184,804
Insurance reimbursements	3,120
Grants, gifts and donations	2,723
Other, including rental of real estate	1,450,029
Other tax-based reimbursements: Ohio Department of Taxation	17,711,917

State Funds	Amount
Ohio Department of Education	
Preschool	\$1,365,980
School-age	1,691,315
Transportation	1,414,694

State Funds	Amount
Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities	
Other	\$90,630
DODD reconciliation - DSP match	2,621,110
Reconciliation of prior year match	4,222,217

Federal Funds	Amount
Adult day supports	\$0
Targeted case management	9,817,889
Title XX	850,501
2022 cost settlement	6,632,800

Federal Funds, continued	Amount
Department of Education	295,435
Medicaid administrative claiming	3,145,436
School lunch	25,172

Total receipts: \$240,221,772

## Disbursements

Type of Disbursement	Amount
Personal services	\$48,408,558
Fringe benefits	24,718,067
Social services	182,159,455
Services and materials	13,821,876
Capital outlay	940,459

Total disbursements: \$270,048,415

Consistent with the board's commitment to the community, receipts and expenditures are balanced with the board's Medicaid Stability Fund.

## Franklin County DD Staff

Franklin County DD is an important public-sector employer in central Ohio. At the close of 2025, our agency had 679 staff members working in a wide variety of service areas. We employ social workers and therapists, school bus drivers and mechanics, teachers, business professionals, investigators, facilities technicians and more. The Service Coordination Department is by far the largest at Franklin County DD, with staff providing case-management services and support to thousands of county residents with developmental disabilities.



# Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities

Helping people to live, learn and work in our community

2879 Johnstown Road  
Columbus, OH 43219

Phone: 614-475-6440

Fax: 614-342-5001

[fcbdd.org](http://fcbdd.org)

## Follow Us



Facebook:

[@FranklinCountyDD](https://www.facebook.com/FranklinCountyDD)



X:

[@FranklinCoDD](https://twitter.com/FranklinCoDD)



Instagram:

[@franklincountydevdisabilities](https://www.instagram.com/franklincountydevdisabilities)



YouTube:

[@franklincountydd1573](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfranklincountydd1573)

